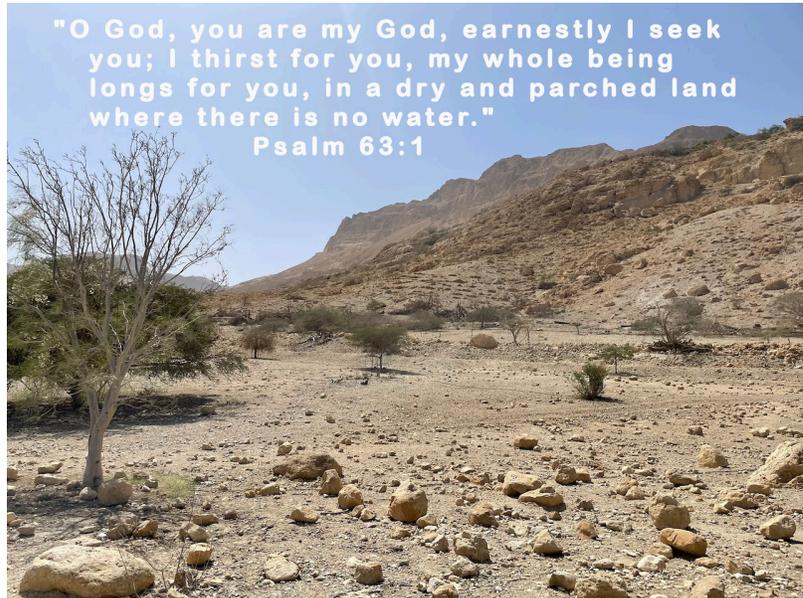


The Sheppards in Liberia



We visited Ein Gedi last year, where David hid from King Saul

Long ago, David cried out to the Lord, "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water." (Psalm 63:1) The arid land in which he found himself reflected the longing he felt in his soul for the Water of Life.



A burned oil palm tree

Here in northern Liberia, we are at the end of the dry season, where scorching, desert-like conditions cause vegetation to wither and the water table to drop dramatically. The hand-dug well in our yard has run dry, leaving us to look elsewhere for water. But the first rains of the year have fallen, giving us hope of better times to come. Likewise, in our ministry to the unreached, we often experience seasons of barrenness, longing to see God's blessing poured down with many lives transformed. Yet, like the first rains, we are seeing a small but growing number of people turning away from the religion in which they were raised to follow Jesus.



Visiting friends in a nearby village

We are in the month of Ramadan, in which Muslims fast during daylight hours while seeking God's forgiveness, protection, and provision. This month, we've asked God to show our Muslim friends who He really is, maybe even through dreams, and that God would bring new people into our lives who are serious seekers or secret believers. God has certainly answered that prayer as we have had more-than-usual opportunities for productive gospel conversations. We hear our Muslim neighbors loudly playing the Manya New Testament recordings in their yards while doing their household chores, and others tell us that they listen to the recordings every night before falling asleep.

Zaburi, Sura 23

¹ Ñe le saa le, ñ Tii Alla le ñ kunnasiila le,
wo lo, ñ gbalanin te foyi la.
² E-e ñoninke dila ñ ma binkene ñimawu
cema,
E-e taala ñ ne ji sumaninwu dafe.
³ E-e fanka kula dila ñ ma.
E-e ñ sen bilala siya telenninwu kòkan
a tso buñeko lo.
⁴ Hali ñ be kela taamala folon no dibi
gbelen koro,
kojuu suu suu tena ñ masiyanna,



Psalms 23, from a book of scripture portions we recently translated

One of the great joys in Bible translation is giving believers and seekers the vocabulary to pray and discuss the things of God in their own language. We recently began translating the Psalms, and the translators have expressed their appreciation of the beauty of these ancient prayers. One of our literacy teachers recently called

and said he had a dream in which John Mark gave him a box containing a Bible with a piece of paper on top that read "Psalm 23." He wanted to know what Psalm 23 said, so John Mark sent him the text in Manya over WhatsApp. He later called back, saying he loved the psalm and intended to memorize it. It's amazing to see our prayers for dreams being answered like this!

We have also observed the power of Christian compassion in pointing people to Christ. Last November, while visiting a village for a literacy class, John Mark met a twelve-year-old girl named Fatima, disfigured by a massive facial tumor, which had started growing from the age of two. Immediately, he contacted our colleagues in the medical field, who recommended a mission hospital in Guinea called Hope Clinic. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, we were able to send her there for surgery in February. As she recovers, she is listening to the Manya audio Bible to pass the time. Fatima comes from a desperately poor family with a disabled father, and such medical care was out of their reach. At a recent meeting of our literacy teachers, her uncle (the teacher who had a dream about Psalm 23), told us just how timely this intervention was. The week before John Mark met her, the woman whom Fatima had been named after came for a visit, but when Fatima ran to hug her, she pushed her away, saying, "Why couldn't I have had a healthy child named after me, instead of a sickly one like this?" The literacy teachers went on to remark how it is the Christians who show compassion to the poor and disabled, while their own religious leaders and wealthy relatives often turn a blind eye to suffering.



Sara with the Trauma Healing graduates

Another way we respond to human suffering is through trauma healing groups. As Sara facilitated a group this past month, she was reminded of the many tragic events that these young participants had already experienced. After completing the first four lessons, one of the young men was involved in a terrible motorbike accident as a passenger, where the young driver of the other motorbike died. He was deeply impacted by the death of this young man, and remarked many times how providential it was that the accident happened while he was in the middle of this class, as he now had many of the tools needed to cope with this trauma.



Standing on the bridge in Konia where we first decided to pursue marriage

The challenges of life here cause us to constantly seek the Lord, as David did so long ago. We find joy and purpose in serving Christ. And to all of you who stand behind us in prayer and financial support, we express our sincere gratitude for enabling us to continue serving in Liberia.

Praise and Prayer:

- Praise for ongoing progress in the Manya and Konyaka translation work.
- Pray for those who are listening to the Manya scriptures and considering its message.
- Pray for protection and wisdom for those who have confided in us about their faith in Jesus.
- As Muslims fast this Ramadan, pray that many would have dreams that point them to Jesus.
- Pray for Fatima's recovery and salvation.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Because of the nature of where and who we are called to serve, we ask that you not forward this email or post it publicly without our permission. Thank you for your support!

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